

ACADEMY
of SOCIAL
SCIENCES

Strategic Plan 2024-2029

Promoting understanding of our
contemporary human world



Foreword



From law and economics to business and management, politics, sociology, behavioural psychology, geography, education, and more, the social sciences constantly touch our daily lives. They bring essential understanding and applied solutions to help tackle societal challenges, including improving economic productivity, contributing to people’s health and wellbeing, addressing education inequalities, helping to mitigate the effects of climate change, and in managing pandemics, to name but a few.

The Academy of Social Sciences is a charity that exists to promote the social sciences in the UK for public benefit. As the world, and the UK, face an increasing number of complex challenges, the understanding, application and promotion of the social sciences to benefit society could not be more vital. Whether focused within a single discipline, working together to bring multi-disciplinary perspectives on issues, or collaborating with the medical, biological and physical sciences or the humanities, social science brings the ‘people perspective’.

Our new five-year strategy expresses our vision to see the social sciences widely valued for their contributions to society, the economy, environment and wellbeing, supported by capable communities of academics and other professionals, learned societies and students. In aspiring to deliver our vision we will build on past achievements and focus our work on six strategic objectives: embed social science evidence and mindsets more fully across governments; safeguard and sustain the health of the social sciences in secondary education, higher education and research; foster strong, skilled and diverse ‘pipelines’ of social scientists; grow the public image and understanding of social science; recognise excellence in the sector; and ensure a sustainable future for the Academy and our work.

Informed by our stakeholders, the 2024-2029 strategy reflects our values and commitment to working with our communities, including our Fellows, our 48 member learned societies, Campaign supporters, and others. Together, this is a network of tens of thousands of social scientists.

Social science brings vital understanding, challenge, and some of the answers, in its research and wider professional communities. Now, more than ever, it is imperative that the social sciences are in a position to play their role to the best of their ability.



Will Hutton FAcSS
President, AcSS



Dr Rita Gardner CBE FAcSS
Chief Executive, AcSS



About the Academy

The Academy of Social Sciences is the UK's national academy for academics, practitioners and learned societies in the social sciences. We exist to promote the social sciences in the UK for public benefit. We showcase, champion and advocate for the social sciences, raising awareness – in policy, business and with the public – of their immense value in understanding our contemporary human world, while also working to help secure a flourishing future for the social sciences sector.

Our distinguished Fellowship of 1,600 leading social scientists from academia, the public, private and third sectors has expertise covering the full breadth of the social sciences. Their evidence-led research and practice addresses some of the major challenges facing communities, society, places and economies. Our 48 member social science societies (learned societies) cover the full breadth of major disciplines, and many of the sub-disciplines and study areas, that collectively comprise the social sciences.

The Academy's Campaign for Social Science demonstrates how social science improves public policy, society and all our lives. It highlights the value of applied social science research and advocates for its greater use in decision-making and in government.

Our vision

The social sciences flourish in the UK and sustain their world leading stature. They are widely valued for their contributions to society, economy, environment and well-being; and led by confident and capable communities of academics and other professionals, learned societies and students.

Our mission

To enhance and safeguard the social sciences in research, professional practice, and education; and to champion and foster the understanding and application of social sciences in policy, business and public life.

Our strategy

Our activities over the next five years will be guided by six strategic objectives. We will work with our Fellows, members, Campaign supporters and other partners to deliver our charitable purpose of promoting the social sciences in the UK for public benefit focusing on the following priorities.

- 1) Embed social science evidence and mindsets more fully across governments and decision-makers**, enhancing awareness of, demand for, and use of social science evidence and building greater parity of esteem between the social sciences and STEM (science, technology, engineering and maths).
- 2) Safeguard the social sciences: seeking to sustain their 'health'** in secondary education, higher education and research, and their funding, in a complex setting subject to changing political pressures.
- 3) Foster strong, skilled and diverse pipelines of social scientists** for the benefit of the social sciences, society, employers and individuals.
- 4) Grow the public image and understanding of social science** with the long-term aim of achieving parity of public recognition with science and technology.
- 5) Recognise and support excellence in the social sciences**, recognising that the UK is a world leader in this sector and that the social science 'ecosystem' needs nourishing.
- 6) Ensure a sustainable future for the Academy and its work** to 'promote social sciences in the UK for public benefit'.



The Academy's core values underpin our work. We exist for the social science family and community as a whole. Our Fellows and members support our work in important and valued ways, including advice and governance of the charity, core funding, and volunteering knowledge, expertise and time. We are committed to encouraging equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) among our Fellowship, staff, trustees, committee members, and in the wider social science community working with the social science societies. We strive to achieve EDI across our activities.

Our strategy is underpinned by annual action plans which define our short-term goals, priority activities and budgets within each of these six strategic objectives.



1. Embed evidence

Objective: Embed social science evidence and mindsets more fully across governments and decision-makers, enhancing awareness of, demand for, and use of social science evidence and building greater parity of esteem between the social sciences and STEM.

The Covid-19 pandemic vividly illustrated the need for social science understanding and research, alongside that of STEM. For example, in understanding which communities were most affected, where and why; how best to encourage the uptake of mitigation measures; and evidence on business impacts that led to adjustments such as the furlough scheme. The same applies to many other pressing issues; scratch beneath the surface and it is social science that lies at the heart of many of the UK Government's priorities, exemplifying how vital the social sciences are to enhancing decision-making, society and our lives.

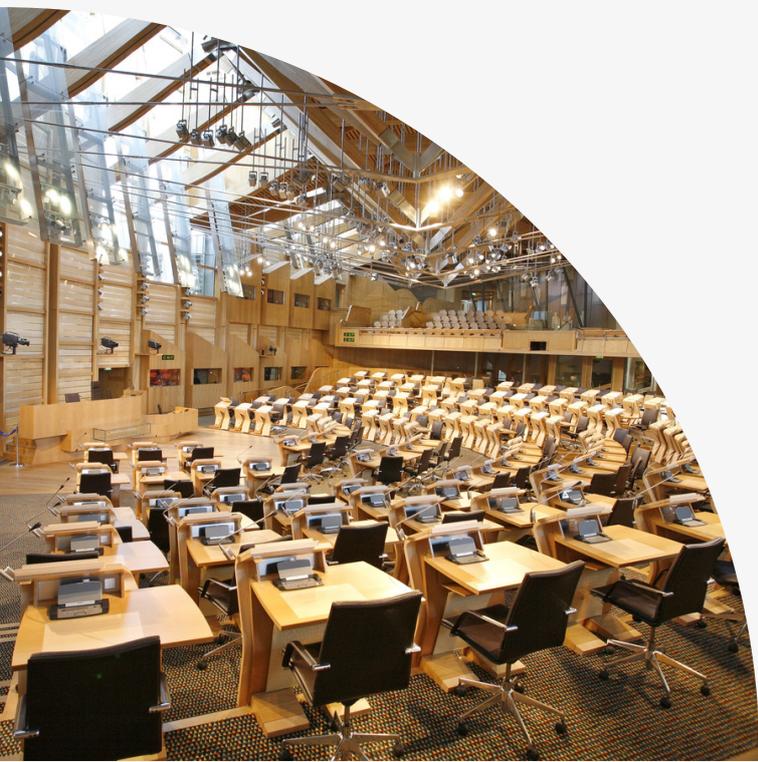
For social science insights to more directly contribute to the UK's technological, social, economic and environmental priorities, it is vital that decision-makers understand the importance and relevance of robust and objective social science evidence and seek it out to help address many of the local, national and global challenges we face.

To achieve this the Academy aims to:

- **Explore the need for an enhanced evidence infrastructure in Whitehall and the devolved governments, and where appropriate seek to catalyse the creation of it,** to support and sustain robust social science evidence and presence in policy and decision-making.
- **Showcase and promote the contributions of the social sciences - their knowledge, research and practice - to the economy, society, people, business and the environment,** to embed greater awareness among target audiences.



- **Exemplify and advocate for social science's symbiosis with STEM and medical sciences in identifying and addressing grand challenges** so that the unique skills, expertise and contributions of the social sciences are better understood and more regularly included alongside STEM in policy initiatives and funding streams.



2. Safeguard & sustain

Objective: Safeguard the social sciences: seeking to sustain their 'health' in secondary education, higher education and research, and their funding, in a complex setting subject to changing political pressures.

With the social sciences underpinning much of our understanding of the world around us, sustaining the health of the sector across the UK, and its supporting ecosystem, is key to securing the benefits that social science provides for everyone. This activity has long been at the heart of the Academy's work.

At a time when the UK's post-16 education is under scrutiny, and the university funding and research landscape remains challenging across all disciplines, the Academy will continue to provide evidence and advocate for decisions that will support the UK in retaining its world-leading reputation across the breadth of social science research. We will also seek to ensure a broad and balanced school curriculum that has strengths across social science, STEM and the arts and humanities.

To achieve this the Academy aims to:

- **Establish the case and advocate for favourable outcomes on the big issues that offer opportunities for social science or that threaten the health of the social sciences.** This includes, but is not limited to, quality-related (QR) and research grant funding levels, including interdisciplinary streams; Higher Education policies and funding that enable diversity and growth in social sciences at individual, institutional, regional and four-nation levels; employability and earnings of graduates in the social sciences; school curricula that is inclusive and welcoming of the social sciences; maximising the vital role the Learned Societies play in the research ecosystem.



3. Foster the next generation

Objective: Foster strong, skilled and diverse pipelines of social scientists for the benefit of the social sciences, society, employers and individuals.

To capitalise on what the social sciences can offer in terms of real-world insight and impact, and in recognition of the high employability and wide range of skills and competencies of social science graduates, fostering the next generation of social science talent is key. This starts with inspiring young minds in secondary schools right through to developing high-end skills and innovation at post-doctoral research levels.

Social science subjects are a popular choice both at post-16 education and in university study. Encouraging greater diversity and inclusion in the sector is important for enabling a wider range of perspectives, voices and experiences to be shared, and in support of social mobility.

To achieve this the Academy aims to:

- **Enhance access to high-quality careers advice for social science** enabling students to understand skills and employability, career options and opportunities, and to be inspired.
- **Work with our community in promoting and enabling EDI across the social sciences** to open opportunities for all, at all levels, in studying, teaching and researching the social sciences.
- **Promote and inform the skills agenda in social science training**, with a focus on skills needs for the future in a technology and data-driven world.



4. Grow understanding



Objective: Grow the public image and understanding of social science with the long-term aim of achieving parity of public recognition with science and technology.

The social sciences underpin all our lives and our futures. They are the science of us – of understanding people, communities, places and the economy. Yet their contributions to nearly every aspect of society, nationally and internationally, is often little understood, or overlooked, beyond academia.

The social sciences are important to us all in their applications, and so raising awareness with those outside of academic circles of the understanding that social science brings and its impacts on our lives is essential to recognising the value that the sector provides to business, to society, to communities, and to individual citizens.

To achieve this the Academy aims to:

- **Promote understanding of what the social sciences are among the public** to raise recognition of the term and the subjects included.
- **Inspire and engage the public with social sciences** and their insights and action on key issues and challenges that matter to citizens and society.
- **Start to create a public-facing social science community**, with Fellows and graduates working in social science at its core as ambassadors, sharing stories and amplifying promotion.

5. Recognise excellence

Objective: Recognise and support excellence in social sciences, recognising that the UK is a world leader in this sector and that the social science 'ecosystem' needs nourishing.

The Academy exists for the benefit of the social sciences in the UK as a whole. Our core networks of academic and practitioner Fellows and member learned societies remain vital to our mission, as sources of expertise, as exemplars of excellence, and as social science ambassadors. They are also essential parts of the social science ecosystem, and through collaboration with them and other partners, we aim to deepen and extend our existing networks and have collectively a stronger voice in promoting social science.

To achieve this the Academy aims to:

- **Sustain excellence and breadth in Fellowship** and promote Fellows' expertise, while increasing the Fellowship slowly and sustainably.
- **Enhance the sense of belonging and collaboration** with Fellows and Learned Society members.
- **Help build capacity and sustain a strong social science learned society sector** to benefit the health of disciplines and the social sciences community as a whole.



6. Ensure a sustainable future

Objective: Ensure a sustainable future for the Academy and its work to ‘promote social sciences in the UK for public benefit’.

As the only organisation in the UK which exists solely for the promotion of social sciences for public benefit, the Academy’s future needs to be secure as an independent, effective and respected champion of social science in the UK, with sufficient and sustainable funding, and strong community support.

To achieve this the Academy aims to:

- **Sustain professionalism in all that we do** at trustee, volunteer and staff levels so that we function effectively and are perceived as valued partners and a strong voice and focus for the social sciences.
- **Continue to grow our profile and reputation** at the heart of the UK’s social science community, as effective and respected champions of the social sciences and whose work has demonstrable impact.
- **Seek to increase our income**, building on our ‘unique selling points’, proven ability to fund and manage projects, and the commitment of our Fellows, in order to be able to do more to promote social science.



The Academy of Social Sciences

c/o Knox Cropper LLP
5 Floor, 65 Leadenhall Street
London, EC3A 2AD

+44 (0) 300 303 3513



www.acss.org.uk



office@acss.org.uk



[@AcadSocSciences](https://twitter.com/AcadSocSciences)



[Academy of Social Sciences](https://www.linkedin.com/company/academy-of-social-sciences)

Registered charity number: 1088537

The Academy of Social Sciences is the national academy of academics, practitioners and learned societies in the social sciences. The sector's leading independent voice in the UK, we champion the vital role social sciences play in education, governments and business.

The social sciences include: anthropology; business, finance & management; criminology; development studies; economics; economic & social history; education; geography; law; linguistics; planning; politics; regional studies; sociology; social policy; social psychology & health sciences; social statistics & methodologies; tourism and leisure studies.